

REMARKS

Claims 2-5 and 8-15 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 6, 7 and 16-21 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Claim 2 includes the allowable feature of claim 20. Therefore, claims 2-5 are allowable. Claims 8-15 are indicated as allowed. Consequently, the application is in condition for allowance.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 because the amendments (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration; (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments cancel rejected subject matter and place the application in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendments is, thus, respectfully requested.

The Applicants acknowledge the indication on page 8, item 8 of the December 16, 2003 Office Action that claims 8-15 are allowed and claim 20 recites allowable subject matter.

I. Reply to Rejections

In the December 16, 2003 Office Action, claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,489,319 to Tokuda et al. (hereinafter "Tokuda"); claims 6 and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,582,002 over Pattas; claims 4 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Tokuda in view of Official Notice; and claims 16-19 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Tokuda in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,167,696 to Maaseidvaag et al. (hereinafter "Maaseidvaag").

Claim 2 which incorporates the allowable subject matter of claim 20 is allowable. Claims 3, 4 and 5, which depend from claim 2, are also allowable for at least based on their

dependency from claim 2, as well as for the additional features they recite. Cancellation of claims 6, 7 and 16-19 and 21 renders the rejections of these claims moot. Claims 8-15 are allowed. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

For the reasons stated above, Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:SSK/jfb

Attachment:
Petition for Extension of Time

Date: June 2, 2004

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